

The Challenges Of Vocational Education In Albania

Ermira Sela, PhD Candidate

University of Tirana/Albania

doi: 10.19044/esj.2016.v12n16p383 [URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n16p383](http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n16p383)

Abstract

Education is seen as one of the main instruments for the development of the individual and the economic growth of a country. In particular, vocational education with its practical components is a very important tool in this. One of his objectives is to contribute to the fight against young unemployment by increasing their skills level. Even in Albania, the employment of this category and their qualifications are problems that require solutions. At this point, we stress that VET is the kind of education for which Albania has already need because it represents an important factor to deal with these issues. This work tries to give an overview of the various challenges that VET system in Albania is facing. The method used has been qualitative. The data has been gathered from official sources with reference to enforcement of educational policies.

Keywords: Vocational education, unemployment, educational policy, labor market.

1. Introduction:

Youth unemployment, which continues to be at a very high rate, is one of the main concerns of Albanian society. Young university graduates looking for work are added daily, but it should be noted that the labor market does not have the necessary capacity to attract and employ all this category. Also, it is seen that there are discrepancies between the skills required by businesses and youth fields of study. For many qualifications, there are few students, while other courses are over followed and graduates have difficulty finding work. In fact, graduates from universities are largely employed in jobs that do not correspond at all with their skills. An example is the increase in the number of those working in call centers.

Is Albania's economic structure itself, which has led to a large discrepancy between demand and supply in the labor market. At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that vocational education would be a solution to this problem. It can be a tool to ensure youth employment and sustainable economic development of the country.

Structured in such a way as to improve individual skills, especially those related to work, vocational education leads to a greater self-confidence and improvement of economic and social life of young people. Numerous international studies have shown that unemployment of this category is lower in countries with a high degree of specific professional qualifications. Furthermore, many countries report that VET has positive effects in the integration of disadvantaged and marginalized groups which are excluded from the labor market.

In this context, also in Albania is being paid attention to its development, the objective is to create a system that is centered on the needs and interests of pupils, with the goals, to prepare them to face with self-confidence the challenges of the global environment. This work makes a brief description of the concept of vocational education and represents its aims and objectives in Albania.

2. What is Vocational Education?

Vocational education is different from country to country with regard to form, providers or the way he acts. However, we can say that the rise of globalization, economic and social changes have numerous implications in the development of this sector worldwide. VET is closely linked to the apprenticeship system and can take place not only in high school but also in higher education and post-secondary education.

According to UNESCO, VET is a term used to refer to those aspects of the educational process involving, unless the general education also the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge related to professions (UNESCO Recommendations, 2011, *Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the Twenty Century*, pg. 7). Stephen Billet has defined the sector as a form of education whose purpose is to identify the necessary knowledge to enhance efficiency in a particular profession (Billet, 2011, pg.6). In this context, also the Albanian law on VET notes that the main aim of this system is to develop the individual's personal characteristics, required for its future professional activities and independent existence (Law nr. 8872, 2002 amended by Law nr.10434, 2011).

Almost all of VET systems were created by their countries to address their concerns often associated with the provision of the qualified workforce and to solve the problem of youth unemployment. This system plays a central role in providing the youth to work, develops adult skills and responds to the economic needs of the labor market.

Numerous studies have shown its positive effects on the economic and social sectors. Among significant results are the reduction of unemployment, the opportunity to obtain a certain qualification, chances to

advance in a professional hierarchy, etc. All these factors affect the productivity of individuals.

Based on the definitions above, we note that even in this paper vocational education term is used to design that field of education that makes a person capable of gaining basic knowledge and skills that are needed to have an efficient performance at work.

3. VET challenges in Albania:

As above mentioned, youth employment is a concern for the Albanian society. According to the labor force survey for 2014, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-29 years old is 32.5%, about 2 times higher than the national average (INSTAT, *Labour Market*, 2014, pg.8). This level of unemployment is a result of the country's economic structure, which has produced a large discrepancy between demand and supply in the labor market.

The production in Albania is dominated by microeconomic units that mostly operate in the retail trade and hotels. In this context, individuals who suffer less unemployment than other categories are graduates from vocational schools. The unemployment rate for this category of young people is 13.9%, while for individuals with a university education is 19.8% (Hackaj, 2015, pg.14). But various studies in Albania have shown that the majority of the young is oriented towards less efficient choices for their careers.

The number of university graduates has increased, but the courses pursued by their have little connection with the real requirements of the labor market. It's high the number of these young people who perform less qualified jobs. The phenomenon is well illustrated by the employees in call centers. This bad planning in the selection of appropriate education complicates the process of transition of young people from school to work. At this point, we stress that, if the country wants to develop its economy and well-being, it should do more for the younger generation. So without doubt VET is the kind of education that Albania already needs.

Due to the impact it may have in the development of human resources, productivity, and economic growth, vocational education has been an integral part of development strategies in many societies. With regard to Albania, this system continues to face many difficulties which affect its quality level. The statistics for the period 2013-2014 show that graduates from vocational schools are only 3136 students compared to 32 118 graduated from general high schools (Source, INSTAT). Statistical data show that there are significant differences in the level of infrastructure, facilities, teaching tools, etc. Among other challenges that the VET system should face we mention:

Lack of equipment suitable for training: The majority of vocational schools do not have enough laboratory for professional practices. Due to lack of tools and devices, professional practices are realized with difficulties, which has negatively impacted the qualitative preparation of students.

Lack of qualified teachers and administrators: Although a significant part of professional specialists are supported with training, within the implementation of various projects, the quality of specialist teachers remains a problem for many schools.

Financial dependency: The majority part of VET's financing is done by the state budget for education, but compared to the real needs of the sector, vocational education funding is inadequate. The allocation of funds is very low and the main part of their goes for staff payments. Donor projects have had an important role in the financing of VET, in contrast to the economic activities of schools and business sponsorship. From the financial standpoint, this has brought significant inequality between vocational schools of the country.

Prejudgment for this kind of education: As a result of little information about vocational schools, there is a huge bias for this sector in the Albanian society. Most parents consider vocational education as unfit and prefer for their children to study in university courses such as finance, law, accounting, medicine, etc. However, here it should be noted that this negative perception is related to the fact that schools do not offer an attractive environment since they do not possess the necessary resources both material and human.

Some of the skills that are required more by the labor market in Albania, as mechanical, electrician, etc., are offered in vocational schools, but often the supply-demand of vocational education and the labor market do not match. For instance, at national level, we notice that:

Although the sector of agriculture, forestry and fisheries holds an important weight in the national economy (about 43%) the offer of vocational education for this sector is only 3%.

At the national level, the manufacturing sector constitutes 41% of the job offered, the VET's offer in this sector is about 5% of the total.

The offer to work in the public administration and financial services sector is about 5%, while the vocational education offer is around 10% (Pullumbi, *Study on VET supply and demand in Albania*).

From the above, we can distinguish that, in some sectors in general, there is a very high inconsistency between the labor market demand and supply of vocational education.

To improve the state of VET system in Albania have been carried out substantial changes in his structure and content. Objectives as stipulated in the law *On vocational education and training*, in the *National education*

strategy 2009-2013 and in the *National strategy for employment and training 2014-2020* were: the development of key personal characteristics of the individual necessary for its future activities; the composition of a system that will allow young people to gain a basic profession but providing the opportunity for further training and education; the creation of a large contact with the world of work with the intent to reduce unemployment among young people, strengthening the skills needed in the labor market, etc. The law has introduced the definition of a number of concepts such as formal, informal and non-formal learning, the role of social partners, the implementation of the Albanian Qualification Framework programs, the establishment of multi-functional centers, etc.

Vocational education, is pursued after completion of elementary education, is offered in vocational schools, lasts 2-4 years and is divided into the following types:

The structure with three levels (2 + 1 + 1years) with 16 directions of teaching that have 56 profiles (e.g. Hotel-tourism has 5 profiles as kitchen, reception, patisserie, bar/restaurant and travel agency).

Structure with two levels (2 +2 years) with 3 directions of teaching that have 12 profiles.

Four - year structure with 2 directions of teaching that has two profiles.

Finally, postsecondary vocational education (non-university), with a duration of 1-2 years, beginning after completing vocational secondary education or after completing high school (Pullumbi, *Study on VET supply and demand in Albania*). These programs are directed to graduates from high schools who do not enroll in universities and have no qualification needed in the labor market and to graduates from vocational schools who wish to obtain an advanced vocational qualification. Currently, these programs are mainly developed as part of the higher education sector. The best example is the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice (FASTIP) at the University of Durres, which combines theoretical learning in faculty with practical learning in the company.

Another important process in the development of vocational education is the modernization of the curricula to approach them with the requirements of the world of work and to increase the degree of flexibility. Curriculum reform in vocational education began in 2009.

Firstly, VET curricula are on two levels so we have curricula developed at the central level and school curricula based on real requirements of the labor market and the concrete possibilities of schools. Secondly, we have the modularization of the VET curricula; this is to facilitate the integration of professional competence and to enable the accumulation and transfer of obtained credits. Thirdly, the VET curricula is

supported by "integral texts" which are used for a long time by a large number of users not only to a professional or direction level, this reduces their production costs (The data from: *National pre University Education Strategy 2009-2013*).

4. Conclusion

From what was shown above, the system of vocational education in Albania continues to be problematic, despite reform interventions in recent years. The VET system fails to play his proper role in the current developments in the labor market.

Barrier factors are: insufficient level of school autonomy for the various financial activities; lack of cooperation with business for the development of practices; non-inclusion of social partners, local and regional educational institutions for the development of curricula or other activities in vocational schools, etc.

In order to be successful, the vocational education system must be able to react, to precede and to respond swiftly and flexibly to changes occurring in society, working life and the aspirations of individuals. This demands close cooperation between the various levels of the education system and society. Objectives that ought to be met for achieving a continuous development are clear. First, we need to increase funds for vocational schools in order to provide the necessary equipment. Cooperation with businesses is one way to provide the necessary funds. The latter, through sponsorship, can create alternative means for financing and development of VET. Secondly, there should be a greater coordination between different existing formative channels, e.g. between education system, vocational training or universities. The Albanian situation must be adapted to international standards, e.g. investing in technological development, etc.

To combat the poor public perception about VET, the actors involved in it have to create awareness on the importance of this system by organizing seminars, conferences, workshops, etc. VET needs to motivate young people to develop their skills through entrepreneurship and the creating of their own businesses. This phenomenon is expected to be more pronounced in sectors that require small investments and specialized knowledge.

Finally, it's necessary to further develop the labor market with the aim to reduce the unemployment rate. In this context, the cooperation with business is an important factor for the development of rapid and sustainable VET, etc.

The realization of these objectives requires hard work.

References:

- Billet, S. (2011). *Vocational Education; purposes, traditions and prospects*. Publisher Springer
- Law nr. 8872, (2002) amended by Law nr. 10434, (2011). *On vocational education and training in the Republic of Albania*.
[http://www.vet.al/files/ligje%20etj/Lligji%20i%20arsimit%20profesional%20i%20azhornuar%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.vet.al/files/ligje%20etj/Lligji%20i%20arsimit%20profesional%20i%20azhornuar%20(1).pdf)
- Hackaj, A. (2015). *Youth employment trends in Albania*.
<http://library.fes.de/pdf files/bueros/albanien/12285.pdf>
- Pullumbi, A. *Study on VET supply and demand in Albania*.
www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania
- Strategjia Kombetare e Arsimit Parauniversitar 2009-2013/ National pre University Education Strategy 2009-2013*.
<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Albania/Albania-Strategy-Pre-university-2009-2013-alb.pdf>
- Strategjia Kombetare per Punesim dhe Aftesim 2014-2020 / National strategy for employment and training 2014-2020*
http://www.sociale.gov.al/files/documents_files/Strategjia_per_Punesim_dhe_Aftesim_2014-2020.pdf
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO Recommendations, 2011*,
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001260/126050e.pdf>
- Labour Market, 2014*. INSTAT.
http://www.instat.gov.al/media/291851/tregu_punes_2014.pdf
<http://www.instat.gov.al>